

In early September and at very short notice we were offered a chance to have a guided tour around the BENTLEY. Regrettably there were only 6 places available per tour.

Our tour guide Roger, who used to work in the coach trimming section and as a Master Trainer, was super personable, very knowledgeable and knew many of the operatives.

The factory was built in 1938, originally to manufacture the Merlin aero engine where 26,065 engines were built between 1938 and 1946. Car production commenced at Crewe in 1946, the first Bentley to roll off the production line was the Mark V1

In 1998 Bentley was acquired by the Volkswagen Group, immediately investing over £1 billion to upgrade the factory. To say it was money well spent is an understatement. The interior of the factory is pristine, immaculately laid out with manufacturing facilities, fixtures and machines that are very, very impressive. As a former mechanical engineer I could have spent days there just looking at the technology on display.

In fairness the cars being produced were none too shabby either. Although the actual assembly line was not running there was much to see at the various stations of the BENTAYGA being built.

Ancillary production areas including, dash board assembly, steering wheel stitching, leather selection and cutting for upholstery were just some of the areas visited.

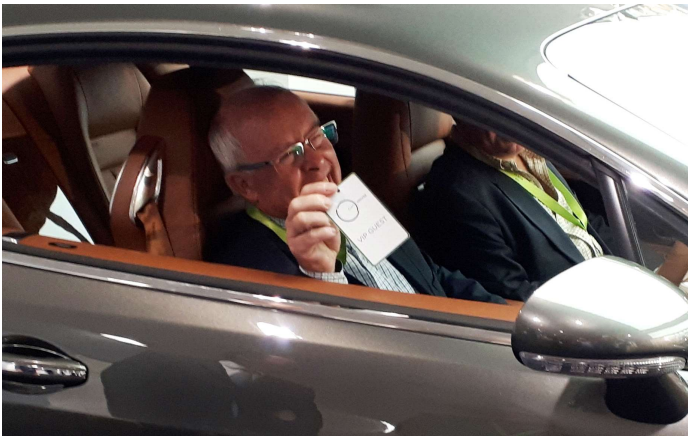
The quality, attention to detail and abundance of pure craftsmanship was evident everywhere, so too in equal measure was the pride that the operatives enthused when we spoke to them or vice versa.

After the tour we were given a visit to the Heritage collection where there were various examples of earlier Bentley models and at last the opportunity to sit in a car and take photos.

This was a truly remarkable and memorable experience and one which several of us would readily agree to again. However there was a slight downside. Usually, a tour around a facility or factory finishes with a small memento or sample for each visitor.

Sadly in Bentley's case this was not to be, as we were allowed to leave empty handed without our keys to a waiting Bentley outside. Maybe next time as it was an oversight!!





Too big !!...My feet don't touch the pedals